THE MAN HIGHER UP

By HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

CHAPTER XXIII

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

IN the days that followed, while Bob McAdoo lay battling with death, his city learned what a hold he had taken on its heart. Perhaps in its newly discovered love it unduly magnified his finer qualities. Perhaps it too generously overlooked the sinister episodes in his career. His death had suddenly come to mean an irreparable loss, his recovery the thing most to be desired.

The newspapers daily gave minute reports of the progress of the disease. In the street cars men read first the account from his sickroom. It was the first question they asked each other when they met in street and corridor: "What is the latest word from McAdoo?" And when the discouraging word was spoken they shook their heads gravely. Prayers for his recovery were offered in the churches. As his condition grew worse the newspapers—even those owned by his enemies—hung out hourly bulletins. Before these bulletins gathered great solemn crowds.

There came a day when the news offered no hope. He had suffered two hemorrhages in quick succession. His temperature had fallen far below normal. His heart was almost pulseless. Life was barely flickering. He could live but a few hours, read the doctors' bulletins. Before the newspaper offices the great crowds waited silently, stopping traffic in the streets, forgetting hunger, sadly waiting for the end.

That night a woman who had braved the dark streets alone and on foot tapped lightly at the door of McAdoo's home and asked to see Miss Flinn. Looking across the hall into the library, the visitor saw a strange group—John Dunmeade, governor of the state; Patrick Flinn, ex-policeman, and Tom Haggin, ex-pugilist and saloon keeper—sitting silent together in a common grief.

There was a rustle of skirts along the hall, and then not Kathleen, but Mrs. Dunmeade, entered the parlor. She looked at the visitor in amazement.

"Eleanor, dear!"

"Katherine!"

And the two women were in each other's arms.

"Is he"— Eleanor began. She could not complete the question.

"The doctors say so," Mrs. Dunmeade answered quietly.

Eleanor disengaged herself from the embrace.

"Can I see Kathleen Flinn a minute?"

Mrs. Dunmeade shook her head. "I fear not, Eleanor. She is with him. And they are expecting any minute—I'll ask her." And Mrs. Dunmeade went upstairs.

A few minutes later Kathleen Flinn entered—a new Kathleen, whose face was hard and stern. She looked at Eleanor coldly.

Before Kathleen's contempt Eleanor's eyes quailed. But quickly she raised them again.

"Miss Flinn," she said, speaking haltingly, "I won't keep you long. I came—it's about that affidavit. I want to say it was all my fault. It was my brother's scheme. I didn't know about it until it was too late. But it would never have been done if I hadn't first tempted Paul to leave—him. And I wanted—to say this. I can't to him, but you're nearest to him. And I—can't you see?—I had to make my acknowledgment before"— She stopped, looking pleadingly at Kathleen.

"We knew it," Kathleen said, still coldly, cruelly putting a slight emphasis on the "we."

Eleanor began again, miserably. "I didn't know what my brother was scheming. And I did it thoughtlessly, though that's no excuse. It was utterly contemptible. When I found out—Saturday night I tried to warn Mr.—him—over the telephone, but he wouldn't listen. And Monday I tried to dissuade Paul from doing it, but it was too late. I was so helpless—so helpless. But that doesn't excuse me, either. I don't expect you to forgive me. He couldn't. I can't forgive myself. But I had to tell you that I know what I did and that all my life I shall have my punishment. It—it's all I can do. Thank you for listening to me. And don't let me keep you from him."

Kathleen's face was not cold now. She took a step forward and looked closely into the younger woman's eyes.

"You—must care something for"—she pointed upward—"for him or you couldn't have come."

A sob was the only answer.

"You poor girl!" she murmured and drew Eleanor to her. And on Kathleen's shoulder the young woman wept softly.

Soon Kathleen said, "Would you like to see him?"

"Yes."

Together they went upstairs to the room where Bob McAdoo faced death. Eleanor knew that she would remember the scene always—for her punishment, she thought. A folded newspaper had been stuck in the chandelier to shade the face of the patient. The shadow accentuated the waxen pallor of his face. His head was shaven, a rough beard had grown out, the pinched features were big and bony and ugly. He might have been already dead, so motionless was he.

Eleanor gave him one long look. She could not repress a sob. The doctor at the bedside looked up with a frown. Then she turned away and crept blindly from the room. Kathleen compassionately followed her. Eleanor sank into a chair and sobbed unrestrainedly.

"It's horrible!" she moaned. "He was so strong!"

"My poor girl!" Kathleen murmured soothingly.

Eleanor looked up wanly. "Why are you so kind to me when I have deserved so little?"

"Because," Kathleen answered softly, "I think I understand. You condemn yourself too harshly, as I did. Forgive me."

Then she added: "Do you care to wait here? You are welcome."

"If I may."

And Kathleen left her alone.

Eleanor lay back in her chair. Subconsciously she took in the details of this room—the room of a man who worked. Mechanically lingering a pile of unopened letters lying on the desk, she caught the address of the one on top. "Robert McAdoo." It was his room! Here the big, lonely man, shut off from his fellows, had in anticipation fought out the battle whose issue so vitally concerned his fellows. Here, perhaps, with hatred and contempt, he had thought of her. Here—she saw the telephone—he had beaten down his pride and humbled himself before her whose idle, selfish vanity had brought such sorrow to him. And now he must die.

"Ah, no!" her heart protested. "It can't be true. He was so strong! He will beat back death, as he has beaten all his enemies. He will not die!"

And the faith was justified. The force had further use for Robert McAdoo.

Toward morning his heart action became perceptibly stronger and his temperature began to rise gradually. Two of the doctors left, first shaking hands with all in the room and congratulating them with an air that said, "Congratulate us!" The morning newspapers carried the good news out to the city.

It was Kathleen who went in to tell Eleanor, saying simply, "He will live."

And Eleanor smiled. "I have known it."

"You put us to shame," Kathleen said. "We have had too little faith. Won't you lie down and get some rest? You are tired."

Eleanor pointed to the window. "No. It is morning now, and I can go home. You should rest yourself. And," she added simply, "I can never forget your generosity to me."

Kathleen pressed her hand gently. "When he has recovered I want you to come to him and tell him what you told me."

"Yes. But," she added in a frightened tone, "please never tell him that I was here tonight." The crisis past, the woman in her reasserted itself.

"I understand—dear."

Walking wearily homeward in the gray morning, Eleanor thought:

"I will make my acknowledgment to him and then will go away forever."

And "forever" seemed a long, dreary time indeed.

One day when his strength was beginning to creep back into his body Kathleen came to his bedside.

"You haven't asked how the election came out," she said.

He smiled wearily. "I'd forgotten I lost, didn't I?"

"Lost!" Kathleen laughed proudly. "No, indeed! You won—and by nearly 10,000. Aren't they the dear, good people?"

And it was true. Sanger had miscalculated. Paul's declaration had been received by many with the skepticism with which eleventh hour charges generally are received. Others had seen only the treachery in Paul's deed and had become even more set in their determination to vote for McAdoo. Thousands had defiantly said that they did not care and had been ready to find excuses for the bribing of the delegates. And the news of his collapse and his critical condition had been an unanswerable appeal to sympathy.

But Bob heard the news apathetically.

"I don't seem to care. I almost wish I had lost. Then I shouldn't have to go on with the fighting. I wonder why they did it?"

"Don't you know?"

"What they charged was true. The delegates were bribed. They ought to have repudiated me."

"Ah," Kathleen answered proudly, "but they love you!"

He shook his head wearily. "It was because they didn't realize."

Another day—it was the first time he was allowed to sit up in bed—when the nurse had gone out of the room for a few minutes he began the conversation himself.

"Kathleen"— he began abruptly, then stopped. "I—I talked a good deal?"

"Almost continuously."

"And you learned—everything—about—about Mrs. Gilbert?"

"Yes."

"Even what a cowardly brute I was to her at the Dunmeades'?" A faint flush came to his sunken cheeks.

"Yes, even that," she answered.

His next question came after a long pause.

"A woman couldn't forgive that, could she, Kathleen?"

"Not many women, I think."

His voice became husky. "I've been thinking of that a good deal. I'd like to make that up to her if I could, Kathleen."

"You may have the chance some day." Long afterward, thinking over this scene, he seemed to remember that her voice was very tired; he supposed it was because the strain of the watching had been too much for her.

And he thought of many things besides his relation to Eleanor Gilbert.

When Tom Haggin, in his rough way, told him of the sorrow the people had shown for his sickness Bob felt his heart suddenly expand in a deep, strong affection for them. They were his people—his not because his machine had whipped them into submission, but because he, though unworthy lived in their hearts.

He knew that over the land were a hundred million others like those of his city—all struggling always, producing always, giving to humanity the equivalent for the right and means to live, giving more than the equivalent, giving more and better than they received from the world. A brave, patient, hardworking, faithful, deserving people these! Pity the man who could not feel a thrill of pride that he was one of them! Bob suddenly knew that love of one's people is a distinct, definite, overmastering emotion which exalts a man and dwarfs his petty self.

He knew of the great "common" people of the land, whose lives are being worn out in the effort to produce far more than they consume, at the end having nothing but the necessity for increased, harder effort, looking about them in dazed wonder and plaintively demanding: "Why is it that we cannot rest? Why have we nothing? Whither has it gone—that which we have created?"

Whither had it gone? He knew the answer. It gloomed solemnly down at him from million dollar palaces, honked hoarsely through the streets from costly imported automobiles, flashed brilliantly from bejeweled fingers, kept gleaming necks and shoulders warm in the face of shivering poverty, gurgled in goblets of precious vintages, raced panting under the wire. Above all, he read the answer in the terrific power of the modern feudal system, concentrated wealth, whose machinery was slowly crunching, crunching, crunching, his people into helpless subjection.

How had such things come to pass? Ah, that question he could answer, since he himself had once been a part of the system! He knew far better than did his patient, blinded people the enormous sums of money needed to fire the engines that run the nation's political machinery and whence that corruption fund came.

A nation, a great people, was being bought, was being sold into slavery.

And all this was wrong, in denial of the ideals of the commonwealth, in disobedience of the natural law which says, "Let a man's reward be measured by his value to humanity." He would do nothing to disturb the just balance of the state. To his executive brain organization and equilibrium were prime essentials. But there was—there must be—some means by which the injustice could be corrected, the world's happiness and the reward of effort more equitably distributed. He could not then propound the remedy. But one thing he knew—the remedy when found could never be applied so long as the machinery of government remained in the power of those against whom the remedy was to apply.

What was to be his part? That question had been answered when Haggin told him of his city's sorrowing in his suffering. These people—his people! He was humbled to the dust. And then, even in his humility, he was raised again by the inspiration that was never to forsake him.

"I have been a failure," thought this man whose brilliant success a nation was considering wonderingly, "since I have missed the real meaning of life. These are my people; they need me. Let me serve!"

"Let me serve!" Kathleen repeated slowly.

It was easy to lay one's heart bare to Kathleen.

"Kathleen" — and his voice was husky, as it had been when he had spoken the same words of a woman whom he had hurt—"Kathleen, I've many things to make up to many people. And I want to do it. I have misused myself. I see it all now—what I've refused to see all my life. Kathleen, something has gone out of me."

"You mean," she said gently, "that something has come into your heart—the greatest of all things."

He smiled at her. It seemed to Kathleen that his thin, ugly face, alight with his new inspiration, was the most beautiful in the world.

"And you will be happy, Bob, as you have never been." There was a catch in her voice.

"Kathleen," he answered gravely, "it was once my boast that I thought nothing of happiness. I'm not thinking of happiness now."

He lost himself once more in his vision, forgetting her.

She left him and went to her room to stifle, if she could, the vain hunger that had never died out of her heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FORCE—WHICH IS LOVE.

DURING the days of Bob's illness Eleanor had wandered restlessly through the big Sanger house in passionate remorse and self hate. During the time of his convalescence the restless wandering continued in mingled thanksgiving and humility. Sanger saw the change he had remarked in Eleanor become daily more pronounced, and it puzzled him. Not until Mrs. Dunmeade was preparing to return home was the amazing reason discovered to him.

It was the day when the doctors finally pronounced Bob out of danger. Mrs. Dunmeade had spent the afternoon with the Flinns. Eleanor turned to her with an inquiring glance.

"He is much better," Mrs. Dunmeade answered the glance. "The doctors say that unless a relapse occurs—and careful nursing will prevent that—it is only a matter of regaining his strength."

Eleanor made no answer. But Sanger saw a strange light—to him a revelation—come into her face. Eleanor quietly arose and left the room, followed by Sanger's incredulous eyes.

"Absurd! Incredible!" he muttered to himself.

Then he turned swiftly, angrily, on Mrs. Dunmeade. "Is this some of your work?"

She answered quietly. "It is the work of something which you, Henry Sanger, or I can neither help nor impede."

"Ah! I remember, your husband has a theory," he sneered.

"John recognizes a fundamental principle of existence. Some day you, I think, will recognize it as a force you can't resist. You rich men are anachronistic. You think in terms of several centuries ago. You won't see that the principle of social responsibility has come into its own—until too late to save yourselves."

"You would be impressive on the stump, Katherine." Sanger was his impassive self again. "But how am I concerned with that principle?"

"In this: The people that recognize it won't long tolerate your antiquated methods and philosophy. And in this: Even your triumph wouldn't bring you happiness or content; selfish victory never does, Henry. You can trample underfoot the happiness of a great people without regret. You can destroy the work of good men—and that wouldn't count with you either. But even you, Henry Sanger, have one love. And you know now that every step you take is on Eleanor's heart."

He did not answer at once. He frowned irritably.

"I have a responsibility," he said at last, dispassionately, "to my wealth and in my class. Incidentally I have an ambition. If between them Eleanor must be hurt—I'm sorry. What you visionaries close your eyes to is that the world is ruled by its necessities, by its pocketbook. You're on the crest of the wave now, but your time is coming. It's McAdoo's ambition and yours—or mine. It may take ten years or twenty, but in the end it will be mine; neither you nor your husband nor McAdoo—nor Eleanor—shall stand in the way. We haven't taken you reformers seriously, we men of wealth. But we haven't developed this nation's industries to let a few dreamers take them from us. Now"—his eyes gleamed—"we accept your challenge. It means war, Katherine. And your friend McAdoo shall be the first to go under. Tell him that." He left her abruptly.

And yet that evening at dinner Mrs. Dunmeade thought she detected in his manner an unwonted gentleness toward Eleanor.

One evening Eleanor and her brother were alone at dinner. At its end he accompanied her to the library.

"Henry," she asked abruptly, "do you know where Paul Remington is?"

"I do not," he returned calmly. "He visited my office twice the day before the election. On his second visit we had a difference of opinion as to what should be done with a certain document. I maintained my position. He seemed much disturbed by that fact. I haven't heard of him since."

"Then he had the decency to be ashamed, at least."

He made no answer, although she fancied she saw a slight flush rise to his face, but it might have been the firelight. She looked at him steadily a moment.

"Under Uncle Henry's will, I believe, he left me this house and the annuity?"

"Yes."

"Will you give me the value of the annuity and buy the house from me?"

"It shall be done tomorrow," he answered abruptly. "May I ask what your plans are?"

"They aren't settled yet, except that I am going away in a few days."

"When do you expect to return?"

"Never."

"Ah! Then I am to understand that, in the parlance of the stage, I am cast off? You doubtless class me as the villain in the recent episode?"

She sighed wearily. "I blame you no more than myself—not so much. I'm not very proud of myself, Henry."

"I suppose most people would regard it a queer evidence of affection, but—I care too much for you to urge you to stay, Eleanor. You're the only person I ever cared for, Eleanor."

He was manifestly telling the truth. Her astonishment was genuine and unconcealed. "I can't believe it. You cared for me—and yet you could"—

"Yes," he interrupted, still quietly. "And would do it again. My emotions are under perfect control. I beg that you make no demonstration. I understand the situation better than I did. Your feeling over that Remington matter is quite justified—from your point of view. Therefore I am ready to assist you, as far as you will allow me, in the casting off process. You have gone over to the enemy; rather, you never were on my side really. Our points of view differ radically. I think you are very wise. It will save us both some—discomfort."

"That Remington affair," he continued, rising, "was very amateurish and, in so far as you were concerned, in poor taste"—

"I was concerned in it all, Henry."

"For that accept my profound apologies. And now—don't you think we'd better end this little scene. My secretary will bring you the necessary papers tomorrow for your signature."

She made no answer. He left her alone. Her loneliness seemed to her immeasurable, complete.

The next day, as Sanger had promised, his secretary presented to her the papers necessary for the conveyance of the house and the release of the annuity; also there was placed in her hands a certified check for a generous sum.

Eleanor could avow her love to Paul, to Kathleen, to Mrs. Dunmeade, but the fear lest she betray her heart to Bob stirred to agonies of pride. But one day she summoned her resolution and went bravely forth to abase herself before the man who, she believed, must hate her bitterly. More than

HIS HEAD TURNED SLOWLY TO FACE HER.

once her heart failed her, crying out "I can't!" to be answered with "You must!"

Fear of him and of his judgment fell from her. For one thrilling instant she looked at him, the mask of expression drawn aside, all her heart in her eyes.

He did not observe her entrance at once. He was reclining in his big chair by the window, a heavy shawl thrown loosely around his shoulders. The ravages of his illness were plainly apparent. The big hands, white and bony, drooped inertly from the chair's arms. In his eyes was the tired, wistful expression peculiar to fever convalescents. She felt in them still another quality, a deep sadness bred of no mere physical weakness.

He felt her gaze. His head turned slowly to face her. He looked at her wonderingly, without speaking. His hand brushed across his forehead in a troubled gesture, as one would brush aside a dream that lingers overlong. She strove to give her words a conventional tone.

"I'm glad you are recovering so rapidly, Mr. McAdoo."

His face lighted up in an incredulous eagerness.

"Are you—really? I was just thinking of you. And sometimes my fancies get the better of me nowadays."

He got to his feet uncertainly. She saw the effort it cost him in his weakness. She put her gloved hand in his; he caught it in a strong clasp.

"You mustn't stand," she said anxiously. "You aren't strong yet."

He sank back into his chair. As he did so the shawl fell from his shoulders. Tremblingly he stooped to recover it. But she was swifter than he. She threw it around him again. As she drew her arm away it brushed against him. For the first time their eyes looked away.

She took the chair where Kathleen had been. It was he who at last broke the silence. The words fell haltingly, uncertainly.

"I can't quite realize it. Often I have thought of you being here—there are so many things I wanted to say to you. Now—seeing you there—in that chair"—

She turned to him eagerly, her eyes pleading with him not to misunderstand. "I had to come—to acknowledge my fault."

"Your fault? But"—

"Yes. My shameful fault! Don't you see, I owed it to myself to come."

"You mean Paul Remington? But that is not your fault. I—I only—am responsible for that. I tried to shape his life after mine—a poor model, Mrs. Gilbert. I tried to cut him off from his happiness. Being what he was, he had to leave me. And there were—others—who were tempting him. We were too much for him."

"Ah, but I made it easy for him to yield by making him discontented"—

"It began before that. But that was your right too. I tried to cut you off from your happiness."

"But—it makes what I did the more shameful—my happiness was not involved, Mr. McAdoo."

He shook his head gravely. "It might have been. He was very lovable." He used the past tense in which we speak of the dead.

Again their eyes fell apart and there was a silence. She forced herself to speak.

"You have learned the lesson of generosity well, Mr. McAdoo."

"I have to earn the charity that has been given me—from every one—now from you. I was cruel, brutal, to you—yet you could come here. Doesn't that prove that you, too, have forgiven much—far more than I?"

"No! For what you said was true. And I was afraid to come—afraid of your judgment! You make me the more ashamed"—

"Don't!" he cried sharply, as if in pain. "It hurts to see you abase yourself before me!"

Again a silence, while his eyes held hers. The quality of his gaze frightened her. It was saying too much—breaking down her self command, drawing her to him. She spoke hastily.

"Mr. McAdoo, do you know that he has disappeared?"

She saw then the hurt that had been put upon him. "Yes. I have tried to have him found, but they can discover no trace of him. But I will not give up until he is found—and our fault repaired." He used the plural unconsciously.

"When you find him will you let me know? I shall send an address to the Dunmeades."

"You are going away?"

"Yes; tomorrow."

"And you will not come back." He did not ask a question.

He turned once more to look out into the street. But he saw nothing there. He was measuring the meaning of the moment. She had changed, as had he; he felt it in her every word, in her presence. Yet her humility hurt him strangely. He had "many things to make up to her"—and he would never have the chance; she was going away, out of his life, as suddenly as she had come. Both feared the next meeting of eyes. Each had a secret that must be withheld. Yet by that telepathy which informs hearts even across the distances each guessed the other's secret, knew that the frank intimacy of the moment sprang from more than a common regret, was more than the death of an unreasoning hostility. But they were not children. Both knew that before life's happiness comes life's responsibility and that they, in their game of cross purposes, had assumed a responsibility which was not yet fulfilled.

She rose. He, too, got to his feet. She held out her ungloved hand. He took it again in his strong clasp. Her lips tried to fashion a conventional farewell.

"I hope you will soon get your strength back and that you will be successful always—and happy." At the last words her voice began to falter.

"I pray that life will be kinder to you than it has been, Mrs. Gilbert. And that you will forget all this—and me." Unsteadiness was in his voice too.

"Can we forget?"

"I don't want to forget!" he cried.

"Nor do I want to forget!" The crimson flooded to her cheeks. But the unruly tongue ran on. "I couldn't forget if I would! That night, when we thought you were dying—it is before me always. When I saw you lying there it seemed to me that I had struck you down"—

"You were here! I don't understand. You came"—

"Ah, can't you see? I had to come—to make my acknowledgment. I thought you were dying. Miss Flinn was nearest to you. I told her. She made me promise to come to you when you were able. That is why I am here now."

She would have withdrawn her hand, but his clasp tightened. "I don't understand. You cared enough to come"—

"Ah, can't you see?" she cried piteously. "Why did you come into my life—to teach me my lesson—to go away now? Why, since you must go away, were you chosen by the force, which is"—

Before him flashed the interpretation of the past few months, of the memory that had outlived the busy, crowded years. His face lighted up with a look no man or woman had ever seen there.

"It wasn't you I hated—it wasn't you I fought against, but—love!"

Words that spoke of themselves! He lifted his head sharply, as does the stag in the forest when he hears the call of his faraway mate. His eyes caught hers in the grip that would not be denied, crying out that she was his—his! Her eyes wavered, fell—returned to his, luminous with the answer. The moment ended.

"Mr. McAdoo, there is a ruined life between us!"

She was gone, leaving Bob alone.

And yet not alone. For with him was the memory of a thrilling, wonderful moment when he had looked into the depths of a woman's heart. And between them lay an impassable barrier, a barrier of their own building.

He bowed his face in his hands and prayed—prayed for courage and patience and faith to bear his punishment—and to atone.

(Continued Next Saturday)

The Secretary of the Navy has created the new office of director of navy yards and has appointed Rear Admiral A. B. Willits to the position.

The Floral Parade helps Honolulu's business. Do you want to help?